

# Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

Loving, Living & Sharing Christ



## Bible Study

### “Empowered by Grace to Do Your Best”

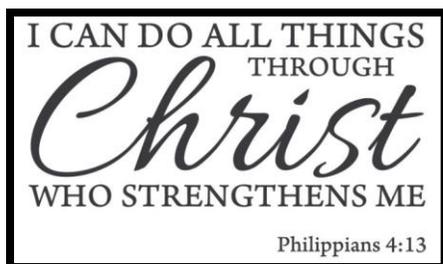
*Prayer: Lord, you are the owner of every animal in the forest and the cattle on a thousand hills. We thank you for the privilege and opportunity to be your stewards. We pray that this study we begin today will equip and energize us to be more faithful in our stewardship. May all that we do bring you glory and honor. In Jesus’ precious name we pray. Amen.*

### Introduction

Because of God’s grace, we can serve, witness, give, and do the work of the Lord. It is God’s grace that gives us the power to do our best in doing his will. God’s rich supply of grace is our power source. God not only forgives and saves us, but he also gives us strength for service to him. By ourselves, we are powerless. In our humanity, we are weak and foolish. God pours out his grace on us because he loves us, calls us, and gives us his work to do. “But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift” (Ephesians 4:7).

The Apostle Paul wrote “I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). When we abide in the Lord, we have the same strength that Paul had so we can do our best in service to the Lord. If the connection to Jesus is ever broken, our source of strength is severed. When we remain in Jesus, we share Christ’s power because he dwells in us. “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

In this study, the encouragement to do our best is made with the understanding that what we do is always in response to what God has already done and through his power at work in us. Our stewardship does not originate with what we do for God. We love because God first loved. We give because God first gave. We speak because God first spoke. It is God who does the initiating. All that we are and have are because of God’s grace. We are sinners who don’t deserve what God does for us. Because of grace, we have new lives in him (Romans 6:4). Through faith, we willingly serve the Lord with our whole hearts and minds out of gratitude for who God is and what he has done for us. Paul encourages us to demonstrate our gratitude in faithful obedience and action. “I appeal to you therefore brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Romans 12:1).



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## Questions for Discussion

1. Read Luke 10:1-3. *<sup>1</sup>After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. <sup>2</sup>He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. <sup>3</sup>Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves.* For what purpose does God equip you?
2. Paul speaks of "the mystery" in Colossians 1:26-28. *<sup>26</sup>the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints. <sup>27</sup>To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. <sup>28</sup>It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ.* What is this "mystery" that enables you to give your best?
2. As sinners, we all fall short of the glory of God. Read Romans 5:15. *<sup>15</sup>But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many.* Through God's grace, we have been redeemed. Define grace by completing the following acronym.
3. G \_\_\_\_\_ R \_\_\_\_\_ A \_\_\_\_\_ C \_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_
4. Read John 1:16. *<sup>16</sup>From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.* What do you receive? How do you receive all that you have?
5. Read John 15:1-8. *<sup>1</sup>I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. <sup>2</sup>He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup>You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup>Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. <sup>5</sup>I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup>Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. <sup>7</sup>If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup>My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.* Who is the Vine? Who are the branches? How is it possible for you to do your best in doing what God wants you to do?
6. Read Matthew 25:35-36, 40. *<sup>35</sup>for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup>I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' <sup>40</sup>And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'* What does God want you to do?
7. Read Acts 20:24. *<sup>24</sup>But I do not count my life of any value to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the good news of God's grace.* Through God's grace, Paul served the Lord with his whole heart and mind. What task did God give Paul that he now gives to you? Is that task important to you?
8. How could you receive Jesus' death and resurrection in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1)? *<sup>1</sup>As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain.*
9. How does 1 Corinthians 4:7 help you as a steward to keep things in perspective? *<sup>7</sup>For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?*

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10. Read James 2:14-17. <sup>14</sup>What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? <sup>15</sup>If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, <sup>16</sup>and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? <sup>17</sup>So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. What point is the apostle making about faith and action?
11. God has chosen you to be his steward. You are to be a faithful steward of your life and resources. What are some characteristics of a Christian steward?
12. What prevents you from helping and serving others more than you do?
13. How did Christ respond to those who mistreated him (See Luke 23:34)? <sup>34</sup>Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." ]] And they cast lots to divide his clothing.

14.

### God Uses Ordinary People to Do Extraordinary Things

Scripture is full of ordinary people whom God chose to accomplish his work. God not only calls; God also equips people for service. Following are some examples of people who gave their all in service to their Lord.

**John the Baptist** (Read Matthew 3). <sup>1</sup>In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, <sup>2</sup>"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." <sup>3</sup>This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'" <sup>4</sup>Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. <sup>5</sup>Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, <sup>6</sup>and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. <sup>7</sup>But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? <sup>8</sup>Bear fruit worthy of repentance. <sup>9</sup>Do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. <sup>10</sup>Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>11</sup>I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>12</sup>His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." <sup>13</sup>Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. <sup>14</sup>John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" <sup>15</sup>But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. <sup>16</sup>And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. <sup>17</sup>And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

*John served the Lord by proclaiming the coming of the Messiah.*

14. In what ways did John the Baptist attract people to Jesus rather than to himself?
15. How did the ministry of John the Baptist end (Mark 6:26-28)? <sup>26</sup>The king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her. <sup>27</sup>Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, <sup>28</sup>brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother

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**Barnabas** (Read Acts 4:32-37). <sup>32</sup>*Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common.* <sup>33</sup>*With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.* <sup>34</sup>*There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold.* <sup>35</sup>*They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.* <sup>36</sup>*There was a Levite, a native of Cyprus, Joseph, to whom the apostles gave the name Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement").* <sup>37</sup>*He sold a field that belonged to him, then brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.*

Barnabas gave generously.

16. How did Barnabas help the Lord's work go forward?

17. How did Barnabas help the Apostle Paul (Acts 9:26-29)? <sup>26</sup>*When he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples; and they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple.* <sup>27</sup>*But Barnabas took him, brought him to the apostles, and described for them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken boldly in the name of Jesus.* <sup>28</sup>*So he went in and out among them in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord.* <sup>29</sup>*He spoke and argued with the Hellenists; but they were attempting to kill him.*

**Prayer:** *Lord, we thank you for the time that we had to study your Word as it relates to our stewardship. Help us to be faithful stewards who willingly serve you with our time, talents, and treasures. Use us as instruments of your love, grace, and mercy to those around us. In Jesus' holy name we pray. Amen.*